



**CPHP**

Centre for  
Planetary Health  
Policy

# Commercial determinants – what tobacco, food and alcohol have in common

Health over profits - How can we regulate the tobacco, alcohol and food industries?

12.05.2026  
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# Definitions



# Planetary health

→ interconnection between human health and the stability of Earth's systems as a whole

→ broad, transdisciplinary understanding of the influences on, and conditions for, human health



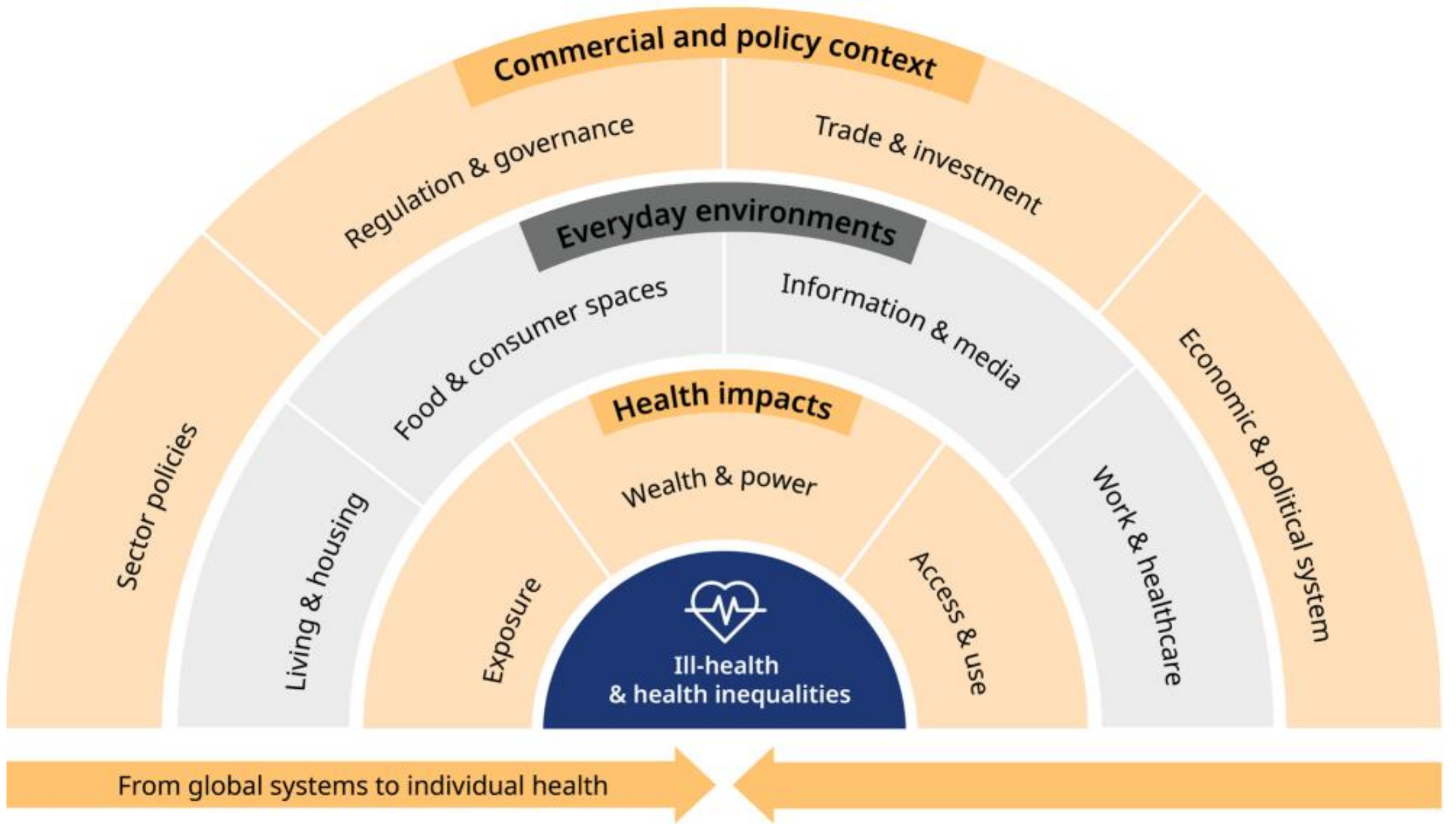
# Commercial determinants of (planetary) health



systems, practices, and pathways through which commercial actors drive health and equity



Corporate influences that also drive climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and resource depletion



Modell of the commercial determinants of health, own illustration adjusted from Gilmore et al., 2023

# **The impact of food, alcohol and tobacco on (planetary) health**

# Unused potential for prevention

- Germany spends more on healthcare than any other EU country — but life expectancy ranks in the lower middle tier
  - Key drivers of mortality and disease burden: cardiovascular disease, obesity, type 2 diabetes, and respiratory illness
  - large share of these diseases are linked to behavioural risk factors: smoking, alcohol consumption, and poor diet
  - direct and indirect health costs (productivity loss, sick leave, early retirement)
- Unused potential for prevention!

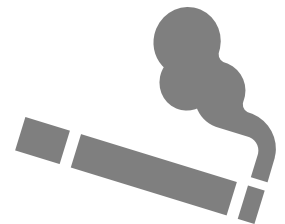
# Food sector

- More than half of the german population overweight or obese
- unhealthy diet → non-communicable → leading risk factors for premature death from diseases
- Most significant risk factor: a high consumption of red and processed meat
- 1/3 of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are produced by agrifood systems
- Animal agriculture cause half of the german GHG emissions
- monocultures, intensive animal farming, the use of chemical inputs → degradation of ecosystems, water contamination, and biodiversity loss



# Tobacco

- smoking is one of the leading preventable risk factors for disease and premature death
- production, consumption, and waste affect ecosystems
- Annual emissions amounting to tens of millions of tons of CO<sub>2</sub>
- the lifecycle of tobacco also creates extensive toxic waste
- novel tobacco and nicotine products create new environmental burdens



# Alcohol

- In 2021, approximately 47,500 deaths in Germany were related to high alcohol consumption (GBD Study 2021)
- Second most significant risk factor for cancer in the EU (4.5% of all new cancer cases in Europe related to alcohol)
- Alcohol production is both water- and energy-intensive, contributes to GHG emissions



# Corporate strategies



# Corporate strategies

Political  
lobbying

Marketing  
and  
advertising

Corporate  
philanthropy

Market  
segmentation

Strategic  
partnerships

Suppression  
of  
alternatives

# **What can we do about it?**

## **Policy recommendations**

# Cross-cutting policy recommendations

- Introduce conflict-of-interest safeguards and lobbying transparency
- Phase out subsidies and tax exemptions for harmful industries
- Align taxes and pricing with health and sustainability goals
- Ban or strictly regulate harmful marketing and greenwashing
- Restrict revolving-door appointments with harmonised cooling-off periods
- Mandate standardised health and environmental labelling

# For futher reading

Think piece

## From tobacco to Big Tech – How commercial interests are shaping planetary health



*As harms to human and planetary health grow, commercial wealth and power expand, while those forced to carry the burden of these costs are progressively harmed by their health impacts, disempowered, or even captured by commercial interests.*

[https://cphp-berlin.de/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/CPHP\\_Impulspapier\\_01-2026.pdf](https://cphp-berlin.de/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/CPHP_Impulspapier_01-2026.pdf)

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# References

- From tobacco to Big Tech – How commercial interests are shaping planetary health: [https://cphp-berlin.de/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/CPHP\\_Impulspapier\\_01-2026.pdf](https://cphp-berlin.de/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/CPHP_Impulspapier_01-2026.pdf)
- Towards unified global action on ultra-processed foods: understanding commercial determinants, countering corporate power, and mobilising a public health response: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(25\)01567-3/abstract](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(25)01567-3/abstract)
- Greenhouse gas emissions from agrifood systems: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/74bfebdb-3272-4e6a-98f4-ee36c7146d44>
- Public health index: <https://www.aok.de/pp/bv/pm/neuer-phi/>



**Vielen Dank!  
Thank you!**

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